



news release

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Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board Approves \$7.0 Million Grant for Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

LANSING, Mich. — In a surprise motion, The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board recommended a \$7.0 million grant to the City of Saugatuck for the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. In 2009 the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) approved a first \$3.5 million grant and recommended a total grant of \$10.5 million. Originally this total was to be paid over three years.

“I want to thank the Trust Fund for their generosity,” said Barry Johnson, Saugatuck City council member. “This is a huge step in reaching the goal of preserving this world-class beach and dune property as a City park, open for public use and enjoyment.”

In December 2009 the Land Conservancy of West Michigan purchased the 171-acre Lake Michigan property for \$19 million with the intent of selling it to the City of Saugatuck as MNRTF grant funds become available. The Land Conservancy now leases the property to the City of Saugatuck for \$1 a year so the property can be enjoyed by the public while the transaction is completed. The project was scheduled to conclude by December 2012, when the City of Saugatuck would own the entire property. The MNRTF recommendation is expected to accelerate that timeline.

“I’m excited,” said LCWM Executive Director Peter Homeyer. “The Trust Fund’s recommendation provides a real boost to finish this up soon. It also challenges the rest of us to do our part so that we can quickly protect this place forever.”

Fundraising efforts for this project are ongoing. A total of \$2.5 million is needed in public gifts to complete the deal. Donations can be made to Land Conservancy of West Michigan at www.naturenearby.org or call 616-451-9476. The Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area is open to the public daily with access at the north end of the City of Saugatuck’s Oval Beach.

This magnificent dune ecosystem includes an amazing diversity of habitats and resources: 3,650 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline, populations of at least 6 rare plant and animal

species including the prairie warbler (state endangered status) and Blanchard's cricket frog (state threatened), open dunes, interdunal wetlands, natural jack pine forest, hardwood-pine dune forest, Great Lakes marsh, 4,452 feet on an oxbow lake, the south pier of the Kalamazoo River mouth, 1,650 feet of Kalamazoo River shoreline, and a historic site known as "Fishtown."